

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, December 18, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-9
Homelessness	10-14
Charities	15-19
DHS Director	20

*Important story at this spot



Child shot protecting mom hailed a hero

12/18/2007, 7:49 a.m. ET

By COREY WILLIAMS
The Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — As the gunman was about to open fire, 7-year-old Alexis Goggins lunged from the back seat of the SUV and threw herself across her mom, crying, "Don't hurt my mother!" Six bullets from the 9 mm handgun slammed into Alexis, one piercing her right eye. Two slugs hit her mother.

Alexis' mother pulled through. But two weeks later, Alexis lies in critical condition, blind in one eye. And to her classmates and many people in this city so depressingly familiar with violence, the little girl is a hero.

"She was trying to save me," her mother, Seliethia Parker, 30, told The Associated Press on Monday. "My baby is just an angel to her mother. I thought as the mother, I'd be saving my child. I never thought my daughter would be saving me."

Alexis has undergone three operations since the shooting, and her mother sits by her bedside at Children's Hospital of Michigan.

As for the mother, she was seriously wounded, with one slug grazing her head and the other entering her chest and stopping just short of an artery. But she was released from the hospital just a few days later.

Parker's former boyfriend, Calvin Tillie, a 29-year-old ex-convict on parole, was arrested in the shooting and charged with two counts of assault with intent to commit murder, along with other offenses. He could get life in prison.

Alexis is learning-disabled and lags behind other youngsters her age. As a result, police say it may never be known whether Alexis meant to shield her mother from the bullets with her body. But Parker said that if her daughter hadn't put herself in between, "I really don't know. We might have been dead."

Parker said she met Tillie earlier this year and called off the relationship after three months, but he had other ideas. "He was harassing me," she said. "He would constantly call my house, popping up in the middle of the night."

Shortly after midnight on Dec. 2, police say, Alexis and her mother climbed into their friend Aisha Ford's vehicle for a late night birthday get-together for Ford's mother. The girl got into the back seat, and her mother took the front passenger seat.

Tillie, who had been standing outside the house in the shadows despite the cold, jumped into the back of the SUV, next to Alexis, and forced Ford to drive at gunpoint for several harrowing minutes until the woman convinced him she needed to stop for gas, according to an account the women gave police.

Ford told police she tried to stall for time while pumping gas. As she and the station attendant called 911, several shots erupted from inside the vehicle. Police say the girl had jumped toward her mother in the front seat.

Parker bolted from the SUV, screaming. Officers found Alexis curled beneath the steering wheel in a pool of blood. Tillie was arrested at the scene.

His attorney, Kim Basen Michon, asked for a psychological evaluation for Tillie. The lawyer was on vacation and could not be reached for comment Monday.

In addition to losing her right eye, Alexis was shot in the chin and jaw. Several days after the shooting, the little girl, her face horribly swollen and wrapped in bandages, stirred and squeezed her mother's hand.

"She is doing much better," Parker said. "She opened up one eye. Everything seems to be going great."

In Alexis' special education classroom at Campbell Elementary School, her classmates have named a stuffed toy with pink ears "Hero."

"We didn't want Alexis' spot to be vacant, so she's got a sweet bear to sit in her place until she comes back," said her teacher, Angela Lang.

Alexis suffered a stroke before age 1 and has epilepsy. Her teacher showed off a journal revealing strides Alexis had made in writing over the past few months. What started as an illegible series of lines had evolved into distinct letters: A, L and E.

"I know she can do it. There's no stopping Alexis," said her mother's cousin, Tonya Blockett-Colbert. "It may take her a little longer now because of this. But she is a fighter."

Copyright 2007 Associated Press. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Judge enraged after Mt. Morris child molester contacts alleged victim's family

Posted by [Paul Janczewski | The Flint Journal](#) December 18, 2007 12:38PM

MT. MORRIS -- A Mt. Morris man accused of molesting dozens of children over the past 20 years recently sent a one-page letter to the family of one of his victims, wishing them a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year."

In his handwritten letter, Kevin T. Odette also admitted he was wrong to molest the family's two victims and said he deserved an alleged beating he received in jail from other inmates.

The mother of the two victims said Odette's letter also asked the family to forgive him, especially because he has forgiven himself.

But Odette's correspondence with the victim's family enraged Central District Judge John L. Conover, who immediately stopped Odette from sending mail to anyone from the Genesee County Jail.

Conover asked officials there to monitor his telephone calls and said Odette can only contact his immediate family members.

Attorney Mark W. Latchana, who represents Odette, said he was aware of his client sending the letter.

Odette appeared unconcerned in court, tilting his head backwards as Conover drastically cut off his communication with the outside world.

Conover had earlier revoked Odette's bond and issued a no-contact order to the victims and their families.

The mother of the victims told Conover the family will be at each and every court hearing for Odette "to make sure he gets his punishment."

"I just don't want my kids to receive mail with his name on it," she said.

Odette was in court to determine any progress from an earlier forensic request.

Latchana earlier asked that Odette be sent to the Center for Forensic Psychiatry near Ann Arbor to determine if he is competent to stand trial and can be held criminally responsible for his actions.

Latchana told Conover then that Odette "hears voices in his head he cannot stop."

Odette is scheduled to be examined at the state facility in mid January. Conover scheduled a Feb.. 5 review date on the case.

Odette faces at least 15 charges in five cases before three different Central District Court judges, including first-degree criminal sexual conduct, possession of child sexually abusive materials, and using a computer to commit a crime.

The cases involved boys and girls, aged 7-13, some elementary school aged and two of them teenagers. The cases began when a relative reported finding child pornography when Odette was moving from Vienna Township to Burton earlier this year.

Investigators later found 75 VHS tapes and more than 200 DVDs and believe he could have molested as many as 75 children from the Gaylord, Lansing, and Flint areas.

Latchana earlier said Odette has been beaten in the jail since reports of his alleged activities were made public. He is now in isolation.

WEST BLOOMFIELD

Abuse case hinges on a keyboard West Bloomfield

Autistic girl typed dad raped her, aide says

December 18, 2007

BY L.L. BRASIER and JOHN WISELY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

West Bloomfield police say a 14-year-old girl with autism who cannot speak cried rape the only way she could: through a controversial technique where a teaching aide helps a student type words on a keyboard.

Earlier this month, the girl accused her father of raping her repeatedly while her mother did not intervene, investigators said. The girl's 13-year-old brother, who also is autistic, told investigators he saw his father showering with his sister and naked with his sister.

Advertisement

"Just because she is autistic, just because she may have trouble communicating, doesn't mean it didn't happen," said West Bloomfield police Lt. Carl Fuhs. "It makes it tougher, but it doesn't mean it didn't happen."

Lawyers for the girl's parents deny the criminal allegations and are scheduled in court today to challenge efforts to terminate custody of the children. Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca declined to comment in an e-mail last week, citing concerns over pretrial publicity and potentially tainting a jury pool.

The Free Press is not naming the parents to shield the identity of a possible sexual assault victim.

A key issue in the case will be the reliability of the method used to make the allegations.

Investigators said the girl typed out statements of the alleged abuse last month on a facilitator board -- a keyboard designed for autistic children -- at school while an aide helped guide her hands to the keys.

"My dad gets me up, bangs me and then we eat breakfast, he puts his hands on my private parts mom knows and doesn't say anything," the girl reportedly typed on the board.

Defense attorneys describe the girl as severely autistic and said she does not speak. It is unclear to what degree she can communicate in other ways, they said.

In recent years, courts have found facilitated communication unreliable, said professor John Myers, a child abuse expert who teaches law at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif.

"The empirical evidence is that it's invalid," Myers said.

The American Psychology Association said in a 1994 resolution that the method "is not a scientifically valid technique," and that messages were "directed or systematically determined" by the therapists who provided the assistance.

"In particular, information obtained via facilitated communication should not be used to confirm or deny allegations of abuse or to make diagnostic or treatment decisions," the resolution said.

Even advocates say the use of facilitator boards has not met scientific standards of reliability for courtroom evidence.

"There's no way that we can satisfy it at that level," said Marilyn Chadwick, a Mt. Clemens native and assistant director of the Facilitated Communication Institute at Syracuse University in New York. "This type of information can add to, but not be the only information you have to look at. It's basically the judge's call."

Most academics dismiss the technique.

"It's bogus and it's nonsense," said Dr. Howard Shane, director for the Center for Communication Disorders at Children's Hospital Boston, and an associate professor at Harvard Medical School.

"The problem here is that the prosecutors are acting as though the only limitation this child has is that she cannot speak," said defense attorney Robyn Frankel, who represents the girl's mother against charges of child abuse and witness intimidation. "What they don't understand is that when a person has autism, their brains are wired differently."

Said attorney Jerome Sabbota, who represents the father: "Here these people struggle all these years to take care of these disabled children, and something like this happens"

The father is charged with first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

In court documents, authorities do not report physical evidence, such as DNA, to link the father to a sexual assault, instead citing a registered nurse's report that the girl's hymen showed three "nonacute tears," likely signs of sexual assault.

Police and prosecutors decline to discuss the case outside of the filing, which includes also alleges the "children have endured years of sex abuse by father and severe mental and emotional abuse by mother."

Fuhs said additional details will come out in court. Court records also show that police interviewed the girl's 13-year-old brother, who is treated for Asperger's, a form of autism. He can speak and told police that he saw his father nude in the house and showering nude with his sister.

Defense attorneys said the strength of the prosecution's case is undermined by the girl's claim that her parents and brother violated a court order by visiting her in the home in which she was placed.

The child, in additional typed messages, said the parents visited her at night and said they would be taking her to South Africa.

"I can say absolutely it did not happen," said Rabbi Levy Shemtov, the family's rabbi with whom the girl has been staying. "Her parents were never there. And the child was never alone."

The mental status and abilities of the child, who attends special education classes, are unclear based on the court filings and other sources. Pretrial investigators noted that the girl needs help with her hygiene. The girl can swim and recently completed a 5k race.

She's been using the facilitator board for three years and an earlier posting by her mother on an autism Web site said the child wrote poetry.

The girl described early morning rapes, assaults in the shower and fondling by her brother, said the school paraprofessional, who added that the girl told her the assaults began at age 6 and that she tried to tell her mother through pointing and pictures, but that her mother did nothing.

Contact **L.L. BRASIER** at 248-858-2262 or brasier@freepress.com.



THE BAY CITY TIMES

Lawmakers take steps to eliminate toxic toys

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

By **BARRIE BARBER**

Times News Service

Get the lead out.

That's the message the state Legislature wants to send to outlets that sell children's products.

The Senate signed off Thursday on an anti-lead legislative initiative that would ban the sale of toys and other goods with a certain lead content. Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm's office has pledged her signature to make the bills law.

State Rep. Andy Coulouris, a Saginaw Democrat, and state Sen. Roger N. Kahn, a Saginaw Township Republican, sponsored legislation that bans the sale of toys and other kids' products with a lead content of 0.6 percent or more.

The mid-Michigan lawmakers introduced the bills after a rash of recalls struck mostly Chinese-made products and food imports on U.S. store shelves this year. China makes 80 percent of the toys in the U.S. market, tens of millions of which manufacturers, including Mattel, recalled this year.

"We all recognize the root of this problem is these overseas factories that are making these toys," Coulouris said. "The best we can do is keep these toys off the shelves."

The nonprofit Consumers Union reported that Chinese-made products accounted for 60 percent of the 467 product recalls, a record last year. This year, product recalls have included tainted toothpaste and defective tires along with a pet food ingredient suspected in thousands of pet deaths in the United States.

Kahn said lawmakers will introduce more legislation to remove "toxic substances that coat toys ... until they are completely eliminated from the state of Michigan and hopefully from our country as a whole."

The pending toxic toy law would penalize a retailer or other violator who sold a lead-tainted toy or children's product with a fine of \$100 per item up to \$5,000 for a first offense. A second offense could net a \$500 fine per product up to \$25,000, and a third offense a \$1,000 penalty per item up to \$50,000.

A Toy Industry Association spokesman could not be reached for comment.

U.S.-headquartered toy companies have said they have increased product surveillance, and China has said it has closed hundreds of factories, but the recalls continue as Christmas looms.

Tracey Easthope, director of the Environmental Health Project at the nonprofit Ecology Center in Ann Arbor, said government must do more to regulate and test for toxic toys.

"This legislation is a really important step forward and helps protect children and the environment," she said.

The Ecology Center tested 1,200 toys from around the world and found 35 percent contained lead, a report released this month said.

The center also checked for other chemicals, such as cadmium, chlorine, arsenic and mercury. The tests found, for example, a backpack with high levels of arsenic, lead and mercury and a necklace pendant with high cadmium levels.

Learning the signs: SOS implemented in Lake City

LAKE CITY - Rachelle Rife is hoping some students in Lake City are learning all the right signs.

Rife is the youth suicide prevention coordinator for Northern Lakes Community Mental Health and this week she has spent a lot of time educating Lake City High School students about suicide.

Signs of Suicide was implemented and the purpose of the program is to help students identify friends or classmates who are dealing with depression and getting them help before it leads to suicide or other things.

SOS incorporates two prominent suicide prevention strategies into a single program, combining a curriculum that aims to raise awareness of suicide and its related issues with a brief screening for depression and other risk factors associated with suicidal behavior.

Rife said the program does a good job of describing warning signs of depression and suicide and it tells the students how they may be able to help their fellow classmates and friends.

"It is going really well. The students seem to be responding well to the curriculum," Rife said. "We needed parent consent and the parents have been really receptive too. That has been encouraging."

Due to the nature of the program, Rife said students had to get written consent from their parents. If they didn't have the consent, Rife would call them.

"When parents first hear about the program they have been apprehensive but once you talk to them they are very supportive," Rife said. "I have gotten a lot of interesting responses. They have been supportive once they hear what it is all about."

Last year, Rife said the school made the program available for the freshman class and this year SOS is being taught to freshman, juniors and seniors. In two weeks, the program will be taught at the middle school for seventh and eighth graders.

Cadillac, McBain, and Mesick also are planning on using the program at some point this school year, Rife said.

rcharmoli@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published December 18, 2007



(Photo by Mike Itchue/Lansing State Journal)

Out of work: Richard Render (left) and Barry Hogle wait for the start of Mass on Wednesday evening at the City Rescue Mission in Lansing. Render, who is blind in one eye, has been staying at the mission for about five months while trying to pick up any work he can. "There aren't too many jobs for 61-year-olds with one blind eye," he said.

Homelessness

Greater Lansing area (2006)

- Homeless people seen by area agencies: 3,220
- Men: 1,411 (43.8 percent)
- Women: 933 (29.0 percent)
- Children: 876 (27.2 percent)

Household status

- Adults and children in family units: 1,614 (50.1 percent)
- Individuals: 1,606 (49.9 percent)

Source: Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network

More working poor may hover close to brink of homelessness

Area shelters report a busy season

Quailo Ray's three-and-a-half years of homelessness started with a red tag - an official sign of condemnation - on the door of the Lansing house in which he lived.

He admits it was his addictions that kept him on the street, addictions to alcohol, to what he euphemistically described as "nonprescription drugs."

He's clean now. He and his wife have been "blessed with a home." But he knows how easy it could be to slip back.

"A lot of the people who have jobs feel secure in their ivory towers," said Ray, 56, as he ate lunch Tuesday at the Lansing City Rescue Mission. "They don't realize, the way the economy is, they could be sitting right here at these very tables at the blink of an eye."

Officials from area social service agencies tell a similar story. They say the area's homeless shelters have been busy for the past few months, though it's hard to say if the numbers of homeless are rising.

"What's changing is we have a lot of people who are on the edge of homelessness," said Mark Criss, executive director of Lansing City Rescue Mission, "a lot of working poor families who are at risk of becoming homeless."

One step ahead

These are people who are often one bout of illness, one lost job, one missed rent payment from being out on the street, and there is concern that the harsh months of winter ahead could make the difference.

"With the cost of utilities going up this year, we all are a little anxious to see how this winter goes," said Angie Mayeaux, executive director of Haven House in East Lansing and chair of the Greater Lansing Homeless Resolution Network.

"Because if you get your heat cut off, then your house gets red tagged and you're homeless."

More than half of Haven House's adult clients work, she said, "But everything costs more. It costs \$3 to buy a gallon of milk now. It costs \$3 to get a gallon of gas. And their standard of living isn't getting any better."

But the issue is more complicated than the higher cost of living.

Chris Bobier, executive director of The Open Door Ministry, which operates a day shelter in Lansing's Central United Methodist Church and serves free lunches on Thursday, said a simple lack of good affordable housing also plays a role.

"I've had four people in my office today with eviction notices who are facing being back out on the streets again," Bobier said.

"Too often, what I see is people getting into housing that is substandard, and then they end up with the apartment or the house being red tagged and they're back out on the street," she said.

Foreclosures, economy

Mortgage foreclosures also play a role, though perhaps not a huge one.

In the 2005-06 fiscal year, four area households said their primary reason for being homeless was mortgage foreclosure, according to numbers compiled by Lansing's Department of Human Relations and Community Services.

In 2006-07, that number jumped to 16.

The state's lackluster economy also plays an unmistakable role, though the Lansing region's jobless rate dropped slightly to 5.4 percent in October.

"Employment is really hard to get, especially if anyone has a criminal record at all," Bobier said, "and it doesn't take much of a criminal record for employers to say, 'We're not interested, because we can pick from anybody.' "

She said her agency has even helped people travel out of state "if they think they can find a better

life somewhere else."

Chris Hall, 35, said just being homeless is enough to scare many employers away.

"They don't want to be associated with it. They don't want to be tolerant to it," he said. "It throws a big roadblock in the way, and it's hard to overcome that."

However, there are positive trends alongside of the negative.

State officials announced a campaign to end homelessness last year, and, in the past two years, the state Housing Development Authority alone has spent an additional \$24.5 million on the issue.

'A huge success'

Among other things, that campaign has provided housing vouchers for perhaps 100 people who had been chronically homeless, Mayeaux said.

"Though that's not a big number, some of those people have been on the streets for years and now have been living in their own home rental for a year," she said. "For us that's a huge success."

Contact Matthew Miller at 377-1046 or mrmiller@lsj.com.

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

NICHOLE M. CHRISTIAN

Shelter residents give back to others

December 18, 2007

Thirty years of mainlining heroin has its price.

It steals things that aren't easily returned, Richard Drewery told me last week, ticking off his losses like items on a grocery list.

Advertisement

At 57, he has no home, just a cot in a corner of a room at Mariners Inn in Detroit's Cass Corridor. In Tennessee, there is a daughter. But their bond has been severed by the miles between them and the memories of a girl catching daddy in the bathroom as he hurried to take "his shot."

Drewery's body has paid a price, too. He is ravaged by hepatitis C. There's a port in his chest because of what the heroin has done to his veins. The effects of his habit gnaw at his kidneys and liver, too.

The one organ that seems unscarred is Drewery's heart. It's beating just fine -- and it is filled with the hope that he can be of help this holiday season to others in need, a dream that lifts his story above the average hard-luck tale you hear this time of year.

Judge for yourself.

"In my life, a lot of people went all out of their way to show me kindness and generosity; I mean strangers," Drewery told me. "If these people hadn't come into my life, I don't know what would have happened. I just want to sort of give back what they gave me."

Drewery, who is a college educated draftsman, and five other residents at the shelter and treatment center, all of them made homeless by addictions, have adopted three families from Hope Community Baptist Center, a church across the street from Mariners. With nothing much of their own, Drewery and men like Kevin Preston, 48, are struggling to raise \$1,000 for clothing, toys and baby items for the families. Mariners staff will purchase and deliver the items to the families, one of which includes six children.

"Just because they're homeless, it doesn't mean they're helpless," Mariners interim director David Sampson said of the unlikely fund-raisers.

As of last Friday, the group had crossed the halfway mark, collecting \$640 in crumpled dollar bills, nickels, dimes and pennies. The most amazing thing is that much of the money has come from their own limited pockets. A few like Drewery who have been drug free long enough to earn a day pass are taking their donation cans to the streets and neighborhood businesses.

But most are like Preston, simply passing it among themselves and Mariners staff, hoping to move the needle on a very personal goal. The cans are turned in to staff each evening.

"Giving is where your blessings come from, that's what I tell 'em," explained Preston, who said he was a "functioning" crack addict for 20 years, holding a job printing signs and tags for Kmart, before coming to Mariners a month ago.

"There aren't a lot of dollars down here," Preston said. "But most of the guys, when they have it, they give from the heart."

Preston's pleas have added \$70 dollars to the total, including \$10 borrowed from his sister. Every hour, he's trying to add more.

"I'm being helped," he said, clutching his can, "so why not help somebody else? These doors didn't have to open to help me, but they did."

Drewery, by the way, has donated \$50 of his own and estimates about \$100 has come in from three cans he set at area businesses, including the shelter's sundry shop. He doesn't talk easily about his future or the problems of his life, but he's full of optimism about reaching the fund-raising goal.

"Even if we don't get \$1,000, I believe we'll get just enough to do what we need to," he said smiling slyly. "I think we got a higher power on our side."

Amen to that.

To donate or learn more about Mariners Inn, call 313-962-9446.

NICHOLE M. CHRISTIAN is a Free Press editorial writer. Contact her at 313-222-6456 or nchristian@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071218/OPINION02/712180328/1068/OPINION>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



Charities see more first-timers this year

By JERRY WOLFFE
Of The Oakland Press

More people in Oakland County and Southeast Michigan are in need this winter than in recent years, putting a strain on charitable organizations in the region.

Unfortunately, many don't ask for help because they've never needed help before, officials at charitable organizations say.

"I would say more people are in need than ever before, and for some donors their ability to give is not what it once was," said John Ziraldo, CEO of Lighthouse of Oakland County.

His comments echoed officials from United Way of Southeastern Michigan, the Salvation Army and the umbrella charitable organization, Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan.

Gleaners, which works in partnership with 425 pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and churches to help the poor and needy, said it is doing its best.

"We're doing everything we can do to make sure that no one wakes up hungry on Christmas morning," said Gerald Brisson, vice president for Development at Gleaners.

The nonprofit provides meat, produce, fruit, nonperishable goods and vegetables to the needy in Oakland, Wayne, Macomb, Monroe and Livingston counties.

"In 2006, we distributed 25 million pounds of food to our partners," Brisson said. "In 2007, if the trend continues, we're going to give out 30 million pounds of food, a 20 percent increase. We give out between 2 million and 3 million pounds of food a month.

"Because of Michigan's economy, people are short on resources already. People are losing everything - their houses, jobs, cars and even their clothes," he said.

Giving in terms of national food donations has "actually gone down by 30 percent," he said.

About 70 percent of the food Gleaners gives away is donated by corporations and 30 percent is purchased by Gleaners from financial donations from the public.

Gleaners, which has a budget of \$39 million, has five distribution centers, including one in Pontiac. It serves as a wholesaler to many other charitable organizations, Brisson said.

"Part of what we are seeing is that, for the first time in their lives, people are having to ask for help, but they are having trouble asking for aid," he said.

United Way said it was the first time for 90 percent of the people who are calling for help.

"We went to the community with a press release, saying our inventory is down," Brisson said. "We really need help."

The phone number 2-1-1 has been established so that anyone who needs any kind of help - food, housing or referrals to other agencies - can call for assistance.

"Some church pantries are empty, and they're calling us," Brisson said. "We haven't turned anyone down yet."

"If we make life better for the least of our community, it makes life better for the best in our community," Brisson said. "Every \$1 we receive provides three meals for our hungry neighbors. Three meals for a buck is a pretty good deal."

The 2-1-1 emergency help line received 250,000 calls in November, said Cara Belton at United Way. "That's a 60 percent increase in call volume between when we started the number in 2006 and this year."

Even though Oakland County is the fourth richest in the nation, poverty has reached its tentacles into the wealthier communities, such as Lake Orion and West Bloomfield Township, said Ziraldo of Lighthouse.

"I think because the need can be found everywhere, all of us have to step forward and help," he said.

Lighthouse also provides transitional housing of up to two years. Some 60 families currently are in transitional housing at Lighthouse, Ziraldo said.

"The state has been in an economic decline for more than eight years," he said. "The end result is a steady erosion of jobs, wages and benefits."

The state has the nation's highest jobless rate at 7.7 percent, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Michigan also has lost 317,000 jobs in the past five years and 200,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs with comprehensive benefits, labor statistics indicate.

"Tell the community thank you for all that they've done and what they will do," Brisson said. "But we've got to keep stepping up to fulfill the need."

Contact Jerry Wolffe at (248) 745-4612 or e-mail jerry.wolffe@oakpress.com.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/121807/loc_20071218192.shtml

<http://www.theoaklandpress.com/cgi-bin/printme.pl>

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **thetimesherald.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Dec 18, 2007

Kids get shopping help

Young shoppers make headway on Christmas lists with police escort

By SHANNON MURPHY
Times Herald

St. Clair County Sheriff Deputy Theo Ellis enjoys giving back to a charity program that helped his family several years ago.

Ellis was taking part Monday night in the annual Shop with a Cop event at Meijer in Fort Gratiot.

This year, the event had 30 children and teens whom each were given \$70 to buy whatever they wanted.

Ellis, who this year was helping kids shop, remembers when he was on the other end. About five years ago, his daughter Annissa, now 9, was picked to participate in the program. At the time, Ellis still was in school and had not started his job at the sheriff department.

"I like bringing a smile to the kids' faces," he said. "We really appreciated it then. So, it's pretty personal."

Ellis was helping Azara Abou-Joudeh, 8, pick out a bunch of toys for herself. Her two sisters, Amera, 6, and Aleeya, 5, also participated in the event.

The girls' baby sitter, Melissa Winchester, said the sisters have been talking about the event for a week. She said they live with their grandparents and there isn't a lot of money left over for Christmas.

"They were so excited," Winchester said. "They came over at 2:30 p.m. and kept asking if I could start the truck yet."

Azara knew exactly what she wanted and was able to make a quick sweep through the toy department to pick up items such as a Bratz doll and Electronic Pet Shop toy.

"I have a list in my head," she said.

After going through the cash register, Azara realized she had some money left, so she and Ellis went back through the store where she found two horse stuffed animals and some batteries for the electronic toys.

"I love this little horse," she said, as she had it dance through the air while she made neighing noises.

The event is coordinated between Meijer and local police agencies. Officers from the sheriff department, Port Huron Police, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the county prosecutor's office took part.

This year, Meijer raised the money.

BobbieJo Hinkle, 10, of Port Huron wasn't planning on picking out too much for herself.

She wanted to buy presents for people in her family, such as her uncle, aunts and brother.

"Christmas is coming up and (my aunt) said I needed new boots because mine are too small," she said. "We don't have a lot of money, so I decided to get stuff for my family."

Cody Parker, 11, of Port Huron felt the same way. He was shopping with Sheriff Lt. Matt Paulus, whose two sons, Riley, 12, and Bailey, 10, come each year to help kids shop.

Cody was picking items out for his mom, dad, sister, brother and a few items for himself.

"It makes the holidays nicer," he said about shopping for his family. "It's not just all about me; it's about everyone else."



Muskegon Chronicle

Stolen Christmas toys for needy 'crime against us all'

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

By Lisa Medendorp

lmedendorp@muskegonchronicle.com

The way it looks now, the Grinch and possibly his minions are going to get away with stealing Christmas from dozens of needy Muskegon-area children.

Muskegon police say they don't have any leads in the two breaking and enterings at the Hope Lighthouse Community Center, 444 Irwin, that were reported Friday morning and during the first week of December.

Toys that were collected as part of the annual U.S. Marine Corps Toys for Tots campaign were stolen.

Most of the toys that were taken sometime between late Thursday afternoon and 8:45 a.m. Friday had just been donated to replace those stolen in the earlier incident that occurred Dec. 2-3.

Police say the two break-ins are not being actively investigated. While police wish they could do something, "there are no leads for us to investigate," Detective Capt. Mark Lewis said Monday.

"Certainly, this is a crime against all of us, including the people who donated these toys," Lewis said. "It's sickening."

The first time the building was entered, someone broke the glass door of the community center with a rock.

Lewis said the door glass was replaced with some reinforced wood.

In the second break-in, entry was gained in the same spot and the inside of the building was ransacked, police said. Most of the toys stolen were meant for children ages 10 or older.

©2007 Muskegon Chronicle

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Dec 18, 6:22 AM EST

Michigan Arab-American organization names executive director

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) -- The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services has named a new executive director. Former Chief Operating Officer Hassan Jaber replaces Ismael Ahmed, who resigned earlier this year to lead the state's Department of Human Services. Jaber, who was named acting director in September, has been with ACCESS since 1977. The Dearborn-based organization, founded in 1971, has a budget of about \$15 million and more than 200 employees. It offers 90 programs such as job training, immigration assistance and English classes that serve about 50,000 different people.

© 2007 The Associated Press.